

Report

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and Rainbow Bridge National Monument

■ **1.0 Site Description**

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area surrounds Rainbow Bridge National Monument in the corner where Utah meets Arizona. While Rainbow Bridge is a separate unit of the NPS, it is administered by Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. For this reason, these two sites are both described in this summary.

Visitation for the Glen Canyon is estimated at 3.5 million people per year and is estimated at 300,000 people per year for the Bridge. Peak visitation months for both sites are May through September. No additional fees are charged for access to the Bridge other than the fee to enter Glen Canyon NRA. Most visitors to Glen Canyon stay from three to seven days. Peak days are generally holidays and weekends.

Rainbow Bridge National Monument is the world's largest naturally created bridge. The bridge has been sacred to Native American tribes for years. It encompasses 160 acres, all of which are federally owned.

The Bridge can only be accessed by tour boats, operated by concessionaires, and private and rented boats that dock at a marina located a half mile from the Bridge. Bridge tour boats, with capacities of 140 passengers, depart from Wahweap, Bullfrog and Halls Crossing Marinas, each approximately 50 miles away. Round-trip boat tours generally take one-half day to complete. Access to the Bridge is also possible via hiking approximately 20 miles on Navajo National lands. This requires obtaining a permit from the Nation in advance. No bicycles are allowed. Rangers control access in the area to assist in re-vegetation of the area and to respect the cultural significance of the area. No camping or lodging facilities are located near the Bridge, and lake camping is not permitted within the boundaries of the Monument. No water-based recreational activities are allowed within the boundaries of the Monument.

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area is known for its unparalleled opportunities for water-based and backcountry recreation. The area includes a total of 1,235,900 acres, of which 1,193,700 acres are federally owned. It stretches from the town of Lees Ferry in Arizona to the Orange Cliffs of southern Utah. Besides scenic vistas and geologic wonders, Lake Powell and Glen Canyon Dam are also found in Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. The construction of the Dam in 1956 sparked a controversy that contributed to the birth of the modern-day environmental movement as it allowed the man-made Lake Powell to fill and cover most of the original Glen Canyon.

Facilities in Glen Canyon are abundant. Two visitor centers (Carl Hayden and Bullfrog) and one interpretive center (Navajo Bridge) offer exhibits on the geology and natural history of the area. The Glen Canyon Dam and Wahweap Marina are located near the City of Page, Arizona, accessible from Highway 89. The northern portion of the Recreation Area can be reached from Highways 95 and 276. Escalante is located on Highway 12 and Lees Ferry is located off of Highway 89A. Grocery and retail stores are located in several towns.

Recreational activities in Glen Canyon include hiking, backpacking, educational programs, swimming, fishing, water-skiing and four wheeling.

Lodging is available at Wahweap, Bullfrog, and Page, and camping sites (both primitive, shoreline and RV) are abundant.

Boat tours and rentals are provided from several marinas in the area. All marinas in Glen Canyon are accessible by paved highways. The City of Page is served by a commercial airline, with charter flights available to other areas on the lake, including Bullfrog, Hite and Escalante and Halls Crossing. In the recreation area, shuttle services are available at Wahweap, Bullfrog, Halls Crossing and Hite. A vehicle ferry operates year-round between Bullfrog and Halls Crossing.

■ 2.0 Existing ATS

Alternative transportation systems (ATS) operating in the park include a local shuttle service operated by concessionaires. For example, the lodges in the area fund shuttle services for their guests to key sites and into town. From Page to Walweap tours are provided two to three times a day. Other than this service, bicycle trails and boats are available in the Recreation Area as previously discussed.

The NPS is completing the development of the new Antelope Point Marina. This marina and resort, created in agreement with the Navajo Nation and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, is seen as vital for sparking economic development in the City of Page. A new access road was created in 1995 to the Marina.

A General Management Plan for the Recreation Area was signed in July 1979 by the Director of the NPS, and was reprinted in 1991. General Management Plans also exist for the individual areas in the Recreation Area, such as Wahweap and Bullfrog.

■ 3.0 ATS Needs and Possible Solutions

The Glen Canyon staff have discussed the possibility of contracting with concessionaires to provide shuttle service from the remote lots to the launch ramps located around the

lake, particularly those at Wahweap and Bullfrog. So far, no parties are interested as the operation does not seem financial feasible at this time.

While traffic congestion is sometimes more noticeable during the summer, the recreation area and the number of roadways are so extensive that this has not become a significant problem to date.

A bike trail from the City of Page to Wahweap is needed to supplement the existing trail system.

The availability and operations of transportation to the Rainbow Bridge National Monument is adequate at this time. No improvements have been suggested by staff for this Monument.

■ 4.0 Basis of ATS Need

The number one problem cited by Glen Canyon staff is parking availability at the launch ramps around the lake. The limited parking spaces at the marina launch ramps are not sufficient to accommodate the large demand during the peak seasons, particularly in the Wahweap and Bullfrog parking lots. For this reason, alternative parking lots have been created further away (such as a half mile) from the launch sites. While the supply of parking spaces is more abundant at the distant lots, visitors are not as willing to park at these lots. The challenge is to entice visitors to park at these distant lots. More emphasis is needed to encourage visitors to first launch their boats at the dock, then park at the distant lots and then walk the distance to the docks.

■ 5.0 Bibliography

Facsimile Transmission from Dan Bishop, Chief of Facilities (Glen Canyon NRA) to Kristin Kenyon (BRW). November 24, 1999.

Glen Canyon National Recreation Area. Internet site: <http://www.nps.gov/glca/>. Information printed November 17, 1999.

Rainbow Bridge National Monument. Internet site: <http://www.nps.gov/rabr/>. Information printed November 17, 1999.

Rainbow Bridge National Monument. "Rainbow Bridge Official Map and Guide." GPO: 1998-432-903/60217. Reprint 1998.

■ 6.0 Persons Interviewed

Dan Bishop, Chief of Facilities. Telephone Interview. November 24, 1999